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Consumer Water Efficiency Program Wins Honor

The Wisconsin Water Association (WWA) has presented its 2011 Utility Special Achievement Award to the Milwaukee Water Works (MWW) for its Use Water Wisely program. In 2012, the utility, in collaboration with Clean Wisconsin, implemented the consumer outreach program to effectively change consumer behavior to reduce wasted water and lower their water costs.

From billing data, employees identify customers with high water use and counsel them on finding and fixing leaks, then mail them a brochure with leak-detecting dye tabs. Meter Services staff provide the same as they investigate high water use and replace meters. They logged 8,900 of these visits July to December with 15,000 investigations into high water usage. An estimated 20,000 customers had received the brochure and dye tabs as of Jan. 1, 2011. The information is also available on the MWW website.

Of customers who returned a postage-paid feedback card, 66% said they found and fixed leaks, most in toilets and faucets. 60% said they used the leak detecting dye tabs and 21% said they had no leaks but found the information useful. The program became operational for 2011.

In presenting the award, WWA Board Chair Kevin Richardson commended the Milwaukee Water Works “for its stewardship of the water resource while advocating for efficient use of water, reducing water waste, and helping consumers get the best value for the water they use with the Use Water Wisely program.”

One of the criteria for the award is that a utility must work with the public to effectively solve a specific issue, and that the program could be used by other water utilities.

The WWA is a 900-member state section of the American Water Works Association (AWWA), professionals dedicated to providing a safe and sufficient supply of drinking water. The WWA provides members a variety of educational opportunities through conferences, workshops, expositions, and legislative activities addressing drinking water industry issues. The central focus is on education about the ever-changing and improving water treatment processes, water quality testing, and U.S. and Wisconsin regulations.